

VZCZCXRO5609
PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNN
DE RUEHKO #0839/01 0870253
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 270253Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2921
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2445
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 2185
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 8487
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 6902
RUEHNN/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 9285
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 0569
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 7498
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG PRIORITY 0616
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI PRIORITY 6956
RHMFISS/USFJ PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9036

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000839

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KN](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: LEGISLATORS EXPRESS HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR 6PT, LEE
MYUNG-BAK IN ROUNDTABLE WITH A/S HILL

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer per 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. LDP elder statesmen Taku Yamasaki and Koichi Kato discussed DPRK policy with A/S Hill during a roundtable at the Tokyo American Center on February 21. In addition to Yamasaki and Kato, the meeting included other leaders of a Diet league on Korean Peninsula issues. The discussion also covered the outlook for trilateral cooperation with Korea under the Lee Myung-bak administration. Regardless of their political views, participants expressed appreciation for U.S. efforts to achieve denuclearization, and hoped that the issue of securing a complete and correct declaration might be settled as early as March or April. The Diet members said they were impressed by President-elect Lee and optimistic that the change in leadership would bring improved bilateral and trilateral relations. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Christopher R. Hill held a roundtable with senior ruling and opposition party lawmakers from a Diet league on Korean Peninsula affairs at the Tokyo American Center on February 21. Participants included 12-term ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members Taku Yamasaki and Koichi Kato, LDP defense expert Gen Nakatani, LDP members Seishiro Eto and Ryotaro Tanose, ruling coalition partner Komeito's Vice President Junji Higashi, opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) policy expert Yukio Edano, and DPJ Acting Secretary General Yoshito Sengoku.

Positive Views on Lee Myung-bak

¶3. (C) Briefing Hill on the observations from their most recent visit to Seoul, Yamasaki and Kato said they were impressed by President-elect Lee Myung-bak and his willingness to work with Japan. They had made clear to Lee their hope that the goals of the Six-Party Talks be achieved by the end of the year. For Japan, they told Lee, the ultimate goal is denuclearization. They reported that Lee agreed on the need to seek denuclearization first, and that he called on Japan to play a larger role in the Six-Party process. Kato described Lee's plan for dealing with the DPRK -- denuclearization first, followed by "liberalization" and assistance with economic growth aimed at attaining a per

capita income level of USD 3,000 in the DPRK within the next 10 years -- as much more forward-looking and constructive than that of his predecessor, Roh Moo-hyun. A visit to Kaesong on this most recent trip had convinced Kato of the futility of Roh's model for bringing about real change.

14. (C) Where Roh had placed singular emphasis on relations with the DPRK, Higashi observed, Lee looks at his northern neighbor in the context of trilateral ties with the United States and Japan and the Six-Party Talks. Praising this "paradigm shift," Higashi thought that stronger trilateral ties would be a positive factor in the Six-Party Talks. Eto focused on the importance of strong economic relations, conjecturing that Lee hoped to use economic growth and wider cooperation with the United States and Japan to entice the DPRK toward rapprochement.

15. (C) A/S Hill praised Lee's approach to the DPRK as a "development" project, and looked forward to greater coordination from Korea in aligning its own approach to the North with the wider goals of the Six-Party Talks. At the same time, he expressed caution about expecting too much of Lee early in his administration. A/S Hill added, however, that the new political climate in Seoul could also help to revive the process of trilateral cooperation between the three countries.

Opportunity, Urgency for Six-Party Talks

16. (C) Japan would be the largest beneficiary of denuclearization, Nakatani told A/S Hill, and has already benefited greatly from U.S. efforts at the Six-Party Talks.

TOKYO 00000839 002 OF 002

Given the DPRK's unwillingness so far to furnish a complete and correct declaration and to respond to questions concerning uranium enrichment and dealings with Syria, however, Nakatani remains concerned about future progress. The confluence of Lee's election in Seoul, the pending exit of President Bush, and Prime Minister Fukuda's need to produce positive results in advance of the next general election in Japan heighten the need for progress in the Six-Party Talks within the next 18 months, Yamasaki contended.

17. (C) Unilateral Japanese sanctions are set to expire on April 13, Yamasaki noted, and while he agreed with lifting some of the sanctions in the hope of greater engagement, he said he hopes to see the declaration and disablement issues resolved by the end of March. He and other like-minded parliamentarians plan to push for the partial lifting of the sanctions as soon as the DPRK is removed from the U.S. State Sponsors of Terrorism list. Eto pointed out the importance of achieving progress in advance of the July G8 Summit, noting that Japan, as host, would like the leaders to issue some sort of statement regarding the status of the Six-Party Talks. Higashi noted that his concerns over the incomplete declaration were fueled, in part, by the lack of information available in Japan on the DPRK's Syria connection.

18. (C) A/S Hill described the current problems in reaching the end of Phase II of the Six-Party process as not insurmountable. He attributed the DPRK's reluctance to submit a complete and correct declaration to a culture of secrecy. A viable declaration would require a level of transparency the North Korean regime is not used to. He went on to caution that more difficult challenges will come in the next phase, when talk turns to such issues as normalization, development of a new Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism, and exploring the possibility of DPRK access to international financial institutions, among other contentious subjects.

Abductions Still Key, but Mood is Changing

¶9. (C) Japanese public opinion on the DPRK and the abductions issue has changed subtly in recent years, Kato noted. Until two years ago, Japanese were concerned very little with denuclearization. In recent months, however, abductions may have become slightly less important in people's minds relative to the nuclear threat. He advised attaching equal importance to both. Kato, too, said he would continue to be a forceful advocate for engagement. Describing past run-ins with Japanese extremists on the issue, Kato noted that the volume of threat mail he received from those taking a hard line on the DPRK had declined recently, a reflection of the changing mood. He blamed the Japanese media for self-censoring on the debate over DPRK issues. Eto said he placed high expectation on A/S Hill and on President-elect Lee to resolve the abductions issue.

¶10. (C) The United States appreciates Prime Minister Fukuda's efforts to deal with abductions in the broader context, A/S Hill said, adding that we must remain respectful of Japanese sentiments and concerns about the issue. The DPRK can and should do more to disclose the fate of the abductees, he added. Stressing the need to proceed in a comprehensive manner, however, A/S Hill said he hopes the Japanese media would not focus on abductions to the detriment of progress on denuclearization. He reiterated for the Diet members that he continues to emphasize to the DPRK the importance of making greater efforts to improve relations with Japan.

¶12. (U) This message has been cleared by A/S Hill.
SCHIEFFER